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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine whether there is a relationship between the psychological types of copywriting students and performance in a copywriting class. The goal was to develop a program of instruction which would systematically alter psychological makeup in a constructive manner to enable students to become better copywriters. Subjects, 23 college students (mostly seniors) in a copywriting class, were given the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator test. Students were then ranked according to their final grades, and psychological types and ranks in each type category were then averaged. Findings indicate the following: (1) high achievers are introverted and intuitive; (2) when all factors are taken into consideration by summarizing the averaged ranks of performance of groups, the highest score is made by the introverted sensing category; and (3) two types of copywriter are most productive--one is creative, the other is analytical, pragmatic, and dependable. (Two figures and eight notes are included; four appendixes containing the course description, a sample of "copy," a list of students' psychological types, a list of creative persons' psychological types, and 16 references are attached.) (MS)

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Advertising Division
Teaching Standards

The Relationship Between Psychological Type And Performance In A Copywriting Course

or

Why F. Scott Fitzgerald Didn't Make It As A Copywriter

by

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine if there is a relationship between the psychological types of copywriting students and performance in a copywriting class.

It was found that there is a relationship.

In fact, a dramatic mathematical correlation indicates clearly the psychological type of high and low achieving copywriting students.

The identification and segregation of psychological type according to performance, indicates that individual psychology can be altered systematically to develop more creative and more competent writers.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Copywriter

A copywriter must have the ability to get an idea and express it - just like any other writer. But a copywriter must perform other functions. A copywriter practices a disciplined form of creativity which requires study of a subject, identification of benefits and the generations of useful ideas that achieve precisely defined objectives. A copywriter, it might be said, must have a pragmatic inspiration when required and on schedule.

The Study

This study was conducted to determine the psychological type of copywriters. If the types were known, it was reasoned, it might be possible to develop a program of instruction which would systematically alter the psychological makeup in a constructive manner in order to enable students to become better copywriters.

Questions

Some questions had to be considered. What makes a person creative? If creativity can be taught, what is the best way to teach it and how can we measure the development? Also, what makes a person a writer; what is the most effective way to teach writing and how do we measure the development of a copywriter?

Background

I teach copywriting by functional correspondence - a technique which requires students to prepare ads for a number of live clients during the course.

In a survey of graduates a direct correlation between performance in the course and job performance was found. The better the performance in the copywriting course, the greater was the likelihood that the students would be

engaged in a form of work where copywriting was an important part of job responsibilities.

The course had the desired effect but I didn't know who it affected and why it affected them. Did the process simply identify the writers--people who had a talent, or did it develop a writing ability. Or was it a combination of both--identification and development.

The development of a writer is a delicate matter. Much of the study of psychological characteristics of creative people, and writers in particular, has been directed toward identifying and treating psychosis, or aberrations in mental behavior.

Creative people are different than ordinary people sometimes in ways that approximate characteristics of insanity. ". . .it appears that a tendency toward manic depression may facilitate access, in creative individuals, to a richness and intensity of experience that is not shared by the rest of us."[1]

It was necessary to determine what was being influenced before the degree of influence of functional correspondence could be determined. The personality traits and psychological characteristics of copywriters had to be known.

It was decided to determine the psychological type of the student copywriters. It was also decided to correlate the type with performance in class to determine if there was a relationship between psychological type and copywriting ability.

[1]Constance Holden, "Creativity and the Troubled Mind," Psychology Today, April, 1987, pages 9-10.

II. METHOD

Sample

The sample consisted of two sections of a class of copywriting students: ten students were in section one; fourteen students were in section two. The sections were comprised mostly of seniors, taking the course to fulfill graduation requirements for an advertising/public relations sequence.

Test

The students were given the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator test on January 6, 1988 by Judith McGunegle, test administrator, from the university's Counseling and Testing Center (one of the students was absent when the test was administered.) The tests were interpreted in a class session by Dr. Donald Baker, clinical psychologist, who has a private practice in Altamonte Springs, Florida.

The Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator is a method of catgorizing behavior according to the different way people relate to their surroundings and process information.[2] Type is determined by selecting the naturally dominant trait in each of the following four categories of opposites:

1. Extroverts (E) direct their energy to the outside world and like talking and action, whereas introverts (I) like to think before acting and prefer jobs involving quiet mental activity.
2. Sensing Types (S) use eyes, ears and other senses to take in information, are realistic and adept at handling details, whereas intuitive types (N) see deep meanings and broad possibilities, and they value imagination.

[2]Isabel Briggs Meyers, Introduction to Type, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, California, 1980.

3. Thinking types (T) make logical, rational decisions and easily analyze what is wrong, whereas feeling types (F) make decisions based on values and are sympathetic and tactful.

4. Judging types (J) live in an orderly way and like to control life, whereas perceptive types (P) like to be spontaneous and remain open to new experiences. ("J" does not mean judgmental.)[3]

The Course

The copywriting course is designed to provide experience in developing ideas and writing copy for media. (See Attachment 1. Copywriting Course.)

The course started in January 1988 and was conducted three hours a week for 16 weeks, concluding in April 1988. The students used as client subjects a folk art gallery, an association, a local tourist attraction, two restaurants, a flying club, and an outdoor guide service. A sample of student copy is included. (See Attachment 2. Robbie Arkovich copy.)

Rank

Students were ranked according to their final grade. The ranks were then related to the student's psychological type and the ranks in each type category were averaged. (See Figure 1. Psychological Type of Students.)

[3]Laura Ost, "To Know Yourself, Know Your Type," The Orlando Sentinel, July 7, 1987, page E1.

Sensing Types		Intuitive Types				Group Totals
With Thinking	With Feeling	With Feeling	With Thinking			
ISTJ 2*,3†	**ISFJ**	**INFJ** 1*,1†	**INTJ**	Judging	Introverts	4
ISTP	**ISFP** 1*,12.6†	**INFP**	**INFP** 2*,7.5†	Perceptive		20.1
ESTP	**ESFP**	**ENFP** 4*,11.6†	**ENTP** 2*,8.4†	Perceptive	Extraverts	20.0
ESTJ 1*,9.8†	**ESFI** 3*,8.6†	**ENFJ** 4*,8.5†	**ENTJ** 3*,9†	Judging		35.9
12.8	**21.2**	**21.1**	**24.9**	**Group Totals**		

* Number of Students
† Average Rank

Figure 1.
Psychological Types of Students - Type Table

III. RESULTS

There were 16 psychological types among the 23 students tested. (See attachment 3. Psychological Types of Copywriting Students.)

A. Intuitives

A high incidence of intuitives (N) was discovered among the students. There were sixteen intuitives compared to seven sensing types.

These results are in agreement with psychological type theory in which intuition is postulated to be a function of creativity. Intuition can be expected to be a part of the creative act in which a new entity is produced according to type theory because intuition is oriented to possibility.

In the general population the percentage of intuitives is estimated to be 25%.[4] This compares to the 70% of advertising and public relations students who showed a preference for intuition in the test conducted for the study in this report.

Tests of creative people have shown a high incidence of a preference for intuition. In fact the common characteristic of four groups of creative architects, mathematicians, scientists and writers tested by the Institute for Personality Assessment and Research was a preference for intuition.[5] (See attachment 4. Psychological types of creative people.)

B. Intuition and Performance

While a class of advertising public relations students might be expected to indicate a high incidence of creativity, it should be kept in mind that the students in the class are taking the course because it is required. Very few

[4]Isabel Briggs Myers and Mary H. McCaulley, A Guide to the Development and use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, California . p. 214.

[5]_____. p. 215.

plan to become copywriters. The common factor is interest in advertising and public relations.

An important result of the test can be observed when the incidence of intuitives is compared with performance.

The highest performing students--the top students in both sections tested, and two of the three highest ranked type categories, were intuitives.

Not only is a high degree of preference for intuition indicated among the students tested, but, also a different level of creative capability is indicated among the intuitives.

C. Introversion and Performance

When the psychological types are ranked according to class performance, the preponderance of introverts (I) in the top-performing student group is evident. (See Figure 2. Psychological Type of Students Ranked.)

Figure 2.
Psychological Types of Students

Number	Type	Rank	Students
1.	INFJ	(1)	1
2.	ISTJ	(3)	2
3.	INTP	(7.5)	2
4.	ENTP	(8.4)	2
5.	ENFJ	(8.5)	4
6.	ESFJ	(8.6)	3
7.	ENTJ	(9)	3
8.	ESTJ	(9.8)	1
9.	ENFP	(11.6)	4
10.	ISFP	(12.6)	1
			23

Introverts comprise the top 30% of the rankings. The highest performing students in each of the two sections were introverts. Thus, exceptional performance in the copywriting class, and capability as a copywriter, is clearly a function of introversion.

Incidentally, the introvert group includes not only the best students but also two of the worst performances, one of whom ranked last in one of the sections.

The high incidence of introversion in the top-performing students, considering the distribution of the whole, is expected to have statistical significance, despite the low number of the sample.

D. Sensing

An almost perfect mathematical progression vertical, (top to bottom) and horizontal (left to right) occurs when the average ranks of the groups are added. This progression is noteworthy because it indicates that sensing is an important element among the introvert achievers. Only one of the three top-ranked categories indicates a preference for sensing as opposed to intuition.

This type category, an ISTJ, which ranked second in performance, comes in first when the categories are considered in groups. This is extraordinary.

It occurs probably because the sensing thinking people "have a good mastery of the target and are able to function based on a precise accessment", said Gerald P. Macdaid, director of research at the Center for Applications of Psychological Type located in Gainesville, Florida.

There may be another reason. The ability to sense important information when combined with the thinking (T) and judging (J) characteristics would provide an exceptional information processing capability and an inclination to process it on schedule. The group more than makes up for its lack of creativity by its critical thinking, problem solving and information processing capabilities. This group functions effectively and reliably, if not spectacularly.

In one study of seventeen creative writers all were intuitives with the exception of two sensing types both of which were ISTJs, the same category in which the two high - achieving copywriting students appeared. (See attachment 4. Psychological Types of Creative People.)

E. Perception

Of some interest also is the fact that the average ranks of two groups, the introverts/perceptive and the extrovert/perceptive were within one/tenth of a point of each other and that the average ranks of two other groups, the sensing/feeling and the intuitive/feeling were also within one/tenth of a point of each other. The proximity of the numbers is indicative of a similar measure of performance of the groups and a similar level of performance of the psychological types. However, there are likely to be qualitative differences among the types, despite the similar overall level of performance.

F. Personality

A consideration of the personality of the individual students seems to support the general test results.

The number one-ranked category (INFJ) (one student), is described as follows:

> Succeed by perseverance, originality and desire to do whatever is needed or wanted. Put their best efforts into their work. Quietly forceful, conscientious, concerned for others.
>
> ...Live their outer life more with feeling, inner more with intuition.[6]

The second ranking (ISTJ) (two students), is described as follows:

> Serious, quiet, earn success by concentration and thoroughness. Practical, orderly, matter-of-fact, logical, realistic and dependable. See to it that everything is well organized. Take responsibility.
>
> ...Live their outer life more with thinking, inner more with sensing.[7]

The third ranking, (INFP) (two students - the best and worst performing) is described as follows:

[6] Isabel Briggs Myers, Introduction To Type, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, California, 1980, page 8.

[7] Ibid, page 7

Quiet, reserved, impersonal. Enjoy especially in theoretical or scientific subjects. Logical to the point of hair-splitting. Interested mainly in ideas.

...Live their outer life more with intuition, inner more with thinking.[8]

The only aberration was one top-performing student, who placed in the ENTJ psychological type. This student claimed to have been miscast in that type, but placed in the same psychological type when retested. Nevertheless, the student continued to claim vociferously, (and still does) that the placement did not reflect the student's true temperment.

IV. CONCLUSION

The test indicates the psychological types of copywriting students.

The high achievers are introverted and intuitive. However, when all factors are taken into consideration by summarizing the averaged ranks of performance of groups, the highest score is made by the introverted sensing category.

Obviously, top achieving copywriting students are introverted. There is a preference for intuition as might be expected in creative poeple but there is a clear indication of a premium on the sensing function which enables the students to focus on the target.

Thus, the results indicate a premium on two types of copywriters - one is creative, the other is analytical, pragmatic and dependable.

The test results are consistent with psychological type theory and the results are consistent also with definitions, job descriptions and performance expectations, of copywriters.

It is recognized that this type distribution is developed from a small sample with an unknown likelihood of a high probability level and a possibility for the type distribution to change, yet, the results are

[8]Isabel Briggs Myers, Introduction To Type, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, California, 1980, page 8.

sufficiently dramatic, and the mathematical indications are consistent with the theoretical factors to such a degree, that more credence can be placed in the conclusions than would be dictated ordinarily.

V. RECOMMENDATION

The copywriting course should be analyzed to determine what components cause intuition, sensing, critical thinking and problem solving characteristics to be identified or developed so quickly.

The study should be expanded to obtain statistical verification.

A study of the psychological type of working copywriters should be made and the results compared with those of an expanded study of student copywriters.

The indications are that psychological characteristics of copywriters can be identified. When this is done attempts can be made to systematically alter individual mental composition to improve creativity and writing ability.

Attachment 1

Course Description

The copywriting course helps students learn how to get practical ideas and write copy for the media. The focus of the course is on the writing process.

After each lesson, students are required to apply the principles in an exercise with a live client. During the interaction with the client students analyse a situation, get an idea based on a primary benefit, express the idea in writing and integrate the creative concept in the copy, headline and graphic so that all elements position squarely as a unit against an objective.

When each assignment is prepared the instructor makes a written comment on it. The piece may also be read in class. Audience comment is impressive and brings to bear the accumulated class experience while enabling the class to move forward as a group.

Students incorporate the comments into their work and ordinarily prepare a new version of the original submittal. During this procedure students are practically forced to incorporate constructive suggestions in their writing. Students who make mistakes and are forced to make corrections repeatedly are less apt to continue to make the same mistake. Either way, correctivly or constructivly the benefits accumulate.

The writing should be accurate unique, persuasive, intellectually mature, gramatically correct and progress logically from a proposition to a reasonable conclusion. In three words, the writing should be convincing, compelling and interesting.

The most important element in this program is subjective - the concentration on the development of creativity and writing skill through conflict-resolution experiences.

Students seem to be well motivated - to some degree by the excitement of working with live clients but also by the desire to improve their writing. Deadline pressure and the fear of falling behind are motivating factors but perhaps the greatest is the constant threat of peer comment.

At the end of the course, the corrected versions of the student work are compiled in a writer's portfolio for the instructor's final critique. Student drafts, with instructor comments, are assembled and submitted together with the portfolio but in a separate package. The drafts provide a clear record of the writer's development and the old comments provide clues for final critique.

The writer's portfolio forms a permanent record of the student's writing style and is used by copywriting students as a sample of their work when seeking employment.

Attachment 2

Robbie Arkovich Copy

There it is, everything I ever dreamed it would be...and more.

You see, I'm a novelty junky. I need someplace new and exciting, something light and whimsical yet a little nostalgic but still trendy.

Audrey Lentz Gallery of Folk, Food and Fun Art that's the place. Has it all--from couch potatoes to pink flamingos and from novety greeting cards to outrageous t-shirts. A novelty junky's paradise.

Call it "pop art" if you want but whatever you call it, you can be sure Audrey's has a little something for everyone--trendy items of the times or nostalgic things of the past.

Come explore Audrey Lentz Gallery of Folk, Food and Fun Art. Experience the thrill of novelty junking.

Attachment 3

Psychological Types of Copywriting Students

Spring 1988 Semester, Sections One and Two

Number	Type	.01 Grade	.01 Rank	.02 Grade	.02 Rank
1	ESTJ	B	7 (9.8)		
2	ESFJ			C	10
3	ESFJ			B	3
4	ESFJ			C	13
5	ENTJ	A	2 (2.8)		
6	ENTJ			C	11
7	ENTJ	D	10 (14)		
8	ENTP	B	4 (5.6)		
9	ENTP	C	8 (11.2)		
10	ENFJ			B	6
11	ENFJ			C	12
12	ENFJ	B	6 (8.4)		
13	ENFJ			B	8
14	ENFP	B	5 (7)		
15	ENFP	B	3 (4.2)		
16	ENFP			B	5
17	ENFP			B	7
18	ISTJ			B	2
19	ISTJ			B	4
20	ISFP	C	9 (12.6)		
21	INTP	A	1 (1.4)		
22	INTP			D	14
23	INFJ			A	1
24	(Absent)				

Attachment 4

Psychological Types of Creative People[9]

ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
		AAA	AAAAA AA
		MMM	MMMMM M
		S	SSSSS SSSSS S
WW		WWW	WW
ISTP	**ISFP**	**INFP**	**INTP**
		AAAAA AA	AAAAA AAAAA
M		MMMM	MMMMM M
		SS	SSSS
		WW	
ESTP	**ESFP**	**ENFP**	**ENTP**
		AAAAA A	AA
		MM	MMMM
		SSS	SSS
		WWWWW	WW
ESTJ	**ESFJ**	**ENFJ**	**ENTJ**
		AAAA	AA
			M
		S	SSSSS
		W	

(Number in each type of MacKinnon's highly creative architects (A), mathematicians (M), research scientists (S), and writers (W).

[9]Isabel Briggs Myers and Mary H. McCaulley, A Guide to the Development and use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, California, page 215.

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